

Inés García Botana

The Metamorphosis

Fiction

All the way home in the bus and in the lift up to his flat Thomas Yersaw was in a pensive mood. So absorbed in his memories was he that it seemed to him he was alone in a crowd. Entering his room, Thomas looked around it with a feeling of sadness, recognising most of the treasured things crammed into it through the years but not caring much. Once more he felt disappointed. Once more fate seemed to be against him. Influenced by the veiled threats he had been tormented with from time to time, the constant derogatory looks cast upon him, the anguishing shame that others were suffering entirely because of him, he had now made his mind up: his decision could not be put off any longer. The secrecy and the shame of it were burdens too terrible for him to carry.

Almost three years had passed...no, four. It was four years to that very day. Four years he had been subjected to every kind of persecution. Bad luck had always been at his side. Shouts, struggles, reproaches (more and more unbearable as time went by), had led him to "a point of no return." Some people, he knew, would talk about "responsibility," "maturity," "manhood." Those magic and eternal words in which people always based their accusations! Thomas took up a wooden framed mirror and scrutinised his face. He surveyed his snub nose, his round chin. The smudges beneath his eyes were like bruises. The image of a vulnerable, trembling, exhausted face grinned back at him from the glass. The mirror reflected a window... The window... And what if... at that very moment, he were to open the balcony window...? And who would dare to prevent him from opening it...? How many steps was he from putting an end to his inner conflict?

"At the end of the day, it is the result that counts." More than once had he struggled to keep back those tears striving to come out. His earlier memories suddenly came back to him: "Men do not cry." (What do men do, then?) No answer. However, by now it was a matter of no importance.

They would cease harassing him with those absurd and menacing threats. Certainly, he had not developed his habit out of necessity but out of a very great pleasure. However hard he tried, he could not get rid of it. In the same way as things are used to starting, things come to an end. The chiming of clock. His leader's tone had become apologetic: "Everything must end this same day." "Things had come to a pretty pass." What an irony! His birthday as a deadline. Much to his concern, the die was cast. The ticking of the clock seemed to seal his fate. Time persecutes you whenever and wherever you are. Long ago he had learnt to set aside even his dearest belongings but now he almost felt he had been deprived of his dignity. To recover it, he could not live hiding himself away any longer. Perhaps in his deeper consciousness, he considered he must face up to things as they really were. He could not live switching between fantasy and reality at his personal convenience. These things leave a bitter taste in the mouth.

Hopelessly, Thomas had observed that family of his, throwing him disapproving looks, always murmuring, always whispering, always plotting against him, and the last straw: that story of those "business men" had come true. In front of those "gentlemen," a completely tactless person had revealed to them the truth about him. There is a price for everything we do. Cowardice

reflects nothing but shame on one's family. He had felt his good name sullied. If he allowed this suffering to become a routine, it would be worse. His honour was at stake.

How many stories? Ten? A hundred? Cautiously, he stood up. Bewildered, Thomas took a breath and raised his hands to the door handle. Eyes bright. With a violent effort, the door burst open. He controlled himself. Thomas stood still. Eyes shut. (How high was that building?) It might be. That did not make any difference. Not a trace would be left. If any, even some car would run it over! Thomas felt himself no longer a human being. A metamorphosis was devastating him. At least he would have the compensation of having done "his duty." The cold wind hit his face. Down in the street the usual crowd went to and fro. He stood firmly on the tips of his toes and gripped the rail tightly. In a twinkle of an eye and after fumbling in the pocket of his trousers, Thomas took out his old, and beloved company. They had been together through an entire lifetime. With all his might and main, he threw it down the street. His dearest dummy. Nibbled and chewed. That day Thomas Yersaw was six, and his tender childhood had been left behind.

